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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006456

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NOFORN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [JO](#) [IO](#)

SUBJECT: FOUR MORE JORDANIANS REPORTED KIDNAPPED IN IRAQ

REF: AMMAN 6370

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) (C) The Jordan-Iraq hostage saga continues, as Jordanian officials scrambled to confirm press reports that militants kidnapped another four Jordanians in Iraq. The two men abducted on July 26 are not yet free despite their employer's acquiescence (at least on the surface) to the kidnappers demands. In an ironic twist, it seems that personal threats from family members against the company chief may have played a role in the company's decision. Meanwhile, the Islamic Action Front appealed for the hostages' release, although it expressed sympathy for the goals of the Iraqi "resistance." The GOJ is receptive to our message that giving in to the hostage-takers only breeds more kidnappings, but it is under significant popular pressure to do whatever it takes to save the lives of their citizens. End Summary.

GOJ LOOKING INTO REPORTS OF FOUR MORE HOSTAGES

[¶2.](#) (U) GOJ officials are investigating press reports that four more Jordanian citizens were kidnapped in Iraq on July 28. MFA official Ali al-Ayed said that the Jordanian Embassy in Iraq had been instructed to follow-up on the kidnapping claim, and Jordan's charge to Iraq -- in Amman this week -- was ordered back to Baghdad to handle the matter. As yet, the identities of the four men -- who were shown on al-Arabiya holding up ID cards (although the wording was unreadable) -- have not been determined. Jordanian citizen Walid Ahmad Khleifat told a reporter that he believes his brother, an independent trucker who left Jordan for Iraq earlier in the week to deliver shoes and sewing machines to an Iraqi trader, is among those kidnapped. He said he tried to call his brother Mohammad several times on July 28 on his cell phone in Iraq, but that an unidentified man with an Iraqi accent claimed his brother had been abducted.

STILL WAITING FOR RELEASE OF TWO TAKEN ON JULY 26

[¶3.](#) (U) Meanwhile, two Jordanians kidnapped on July 26 have not yet been released, despite their employer's announcement on July 27 that the company would freeze operations in Iraq (ref). GOJ officials confirmed to Charge on July 29 that the company, Daoud and Partners, still intends to continue operations in Iraq despite its public announcement, but under a different guise (perhaps by changing its name) -- this subterfuge, of course, in no way affects the perception that kidnappings work, and perception is all that matters in this case. The Islamic Action Front, which has been sympathetic to the activities of the militants in Iraq, issued a statement that it "appreciates the motives of the Iraqi resistance in pressuring the occupation forces, and the firms which provide services to these forces, to swiftly leave Iraq." At the same time, it urged the kidnappers to release the Jordanians, saying they would be "compensated by God."

[¶4.](#) (C) The GOJ tried to distance itself from the company's decision (indeed, per ref, it went against the advice of GOJ officials). Minister of Planning Bassam Awadallah, who is traveling with King Abdullah, told reporters in Hong Kong that, "It's a company decision. The government has absolutely nothing to do with it," adding that the company's move would not affect U.S.-Jordanian relations. "The government of Jordan is interested in protecting Jordanian lives and the government of Jordan is also interested in reconstruction and the stability of Iraq." However, Jordanian officials could have prevented the company's move -- but at the political price of seeming indifferent in a humanitarian crisis.

THREATS FROM ALL SIDES

[¶5.](#) (U) Threats against the hostages' employer from the

families may have played into the company's decision to announce a withdrawal from Iraq. According to press reports, male family members who staged a sit-in outside the company's Amman office on July 27 threatened to kill Chief Executive Rami al-'Uweis if he did not give into the kidnappers demands. Ahmad Salama, father of one of the hostages, told reporters: "We will chop off the head of the firm's director if he doesn't heed our demands to completely cease his operation in Iraq." Meanwhile, Umar al-Adwan, brother of other hostage, said: "We told the firm's executive director, Rami al-'Uweis that if he does not comply with the kidnappers' demands today, his company and the lives of his employees will not be spared." Al-'Uweis later that day held a press conference announcing his company would freeze activities in Jordan. The family members immediately expressed their gratitude, and Umar al-Adwan retracted his threat with an apology, saying he had spoken "in a moment of rage," according to press reports.

COMMENT

16. (S/NF) The GOJ is receptive to our repeated message that giving into the hostage-takers' demands will only breed more abductions -- both Charge and ORCA reinforced this message with GID Chief Sa'ad Kheir and FonMin Muasher on August 29 -- and insists it has counseled the company and family members with the same message. However, as exemplified by the emotional (and ironic) violent threats against the employer, the pressure from the families is great. Many ordinary Jordanians do not believe that a strong stand against terrorism is worth dying for, particularly for what they perceive is a U.S.-instigated crisis in Iraq.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE